The London Conference on Afghanistan
4 December 2014

Afghanistan and International Community: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership

Communiqué

1. We, the National Unity Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (hereafter called the Afghan Government) and the International Community along with other partners, met on 4 December 2014 in London to reaffirm and consolidate our partnership as we begin the Transformation Decade (2015 to 2024). We renewed our commitment to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) set out at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, and reached consensus on a process to refresh the TMAF at next year's Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) based in particular on the reform programme and priorities of the new Afghan Government.

2. The international participants congratulated Afghanistan on peacefully completing the first ever democratic transfer of power in the country's history, culminating in the formation of the new Government. The London Conference was the first opportunity for the new Afghan Government, the International Community, and wider stakeholders, to set out on the world stage our collective commitments to Afghanistan's future after the 2014 drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force as we jointly proceed into the Transformation Decade.

3. Participants confirmed that the Afghan Government reform programme, entitled "*Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership*" provides a credible framework for improving security, political stability, economic and fiscal stabilisation, advancing good governance, including electoral reform and strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the rule of law, and respect for human rights, particularly in relation to women and girls, fighting corruption and the illicit economy including narcotics, and paving the way for enhanced private sector investments and sustainable social, environmental and economic development.

4. The Participants welcomed the Afghan Government's plans to enhance productivity, increase its domestic revenue mobilisation, to attract more private sector investment, and stimulate growth and employment opportunities. Over time this approach will reduce Afghanistan's dependence on external support. However, Participants recognised that this is a long term endeavour and that the Afghan Government will continue to have significant economic requirements that cannot be met solely by domestic revenues. To help ensure that Afghanistan remains on a path towards a more sustainable future for all Afghans, the International Community reaffirmed its Tokyo commitment of providing sixteen billion US dollars through 2015, and sustaining support, through 2017, at or near the levels of the past decade. Going forward, the International Community reiterated its commitment, as set out in the Tokyo Declaration, to direct significant and continuing but declining financial support towards Afghanistan's social and

economic development priorities through the Transformation Decade. Further, the International Community reaffirmed that its ability to sustain support for Afghanistan depends upon the principle of mutual accountability and the Afghan Government delivering on its commitments under the TMAF process.

5. The London Conference was co-chaired by H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The event was opened by H.E. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom.

Section 2: Context

6. The London Conference, together with the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014, has solidified a strong foundation to support Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade. The Participants noted the outcomes from the Wales NATO Summit and the steps taken by the Afghan Government to ensure the continued security of their country, including through the ratification of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States of America and the Status of Forces Agreement with NATO on 30 November 2014 in Kabul. These agreements respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty among all the states of the region. This Conference has built on the outcomes of previous conferences, in which the Afghan Government and the International Community mutually renewed their long-term commitments in the areas of governance, security, the peace process, economic and social development, human rights in particular women and children's full enjoyment of these rights, and regional cooperation.

7. Participants noted that from an extremely challenging starting point as one of the least developed countries in the world, Afghanistan has made significant progress over the past thirteen years, in security, elections and many fields of development, including education, health, roads, civil aviation, agriculture, and ICT, as indicated in "*Realizing Self-Reliance*". This has all been made possible as a result of an unprecedented level of international support and the commitment and sacrifice of both Afghan and international forces as well as other men and women including civilian and development personnel.

8. The Participants noted that security is a prerequisite for Afghanistan's continued development. The Participants reaffirmed the importance of the peace process to ending violence and sustaining development in Afghanistan. The Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process towards reconciliation and peace must be transparent and inclusive, representing the legitimate interests of all Afghans, including women. In this context, the Participants reiterated the importance of the peace process principles as per the UN Security Council Resolutions, such as the renunciation of violence, the breaking of ties to international terrorism and respect for the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions, notably the rights of all Afghans, particularly women, and emphasised the region's cooperation and respect for the peace process and its outcome as demonstrated at the October 2014 Beijing Conference Declaration.

9. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah met on 2 December 2014 at NATO Headquarters with Foreign Ministers from the 42 NATO Allies and Partner nations participating in the Resolute Support Mission. At the meeting, they agreed to launch the Resolute Support Mission on 1 January 2015 opening a new chapter in the Alliance's relationship with Afghanistan.

10. The Participants recognised that the issue of Afghan refugees impacts on the economic development of regional countries. We commend regional countries, in particular Pakistan and Iran, for their efforts in hosting millions of Afghans, in the spirit of good neighbourly relations, over the past several decades. In this regard, we call on the International Community to provide further support and assistance to enable their voluntary repatriation and resettlement in Afghanistan in a safe, timely and dignified manner. Furthermore, efforts are required to address the issue of irregular migration.

11. Participants recognised that, despite achievements, Afghanistan faces formidable challenges. Meeting them requires long-term commitments and sustained realistic strategies to root out corruption, combat terrorism and strengthen good governance and rule of law, build the foundations for sustainable and inclusive productivity and growth, enhance regional dialogue and cooperation, progress in social development including health, sanitation and education, particularly in rural areas, and strengthening human rights and gender mainstreaming. The Participants emphasised the need for a broad approach to tackling the illicit drug business, involving production, trafficking, demand and financial flows arising from the illicit economy, including providing incentives for legal economic activity.

12. The International Community reiterated its support to the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve self-reliance. The Participants strongly welcomed the new Afghan Government's early action to address economic and fiscal challenges, including measures to increase sustainable productivity, strengthen revenue collection and the banking sector, prioritise expenditure and improve the private investment climate.

13. The Participants appreciated the positive steps being taken by the new Afghan Government. In particular, the decisive actions on the Kabul Bank as an important immediate step on corruption and efforts to improve relationships in the region were strongly welcomed. Participants also acknowledged the significant positive steps being taken to continue the professionalisation of state institutions, and increase trade and diplomatic interactions with countries in the region.

Section 3: The Reform Agenda

14. The Afghan Government presented a reform strategy built around regional connectivity, good governance, and investments in productivity. Central to this strategy is economic cooperation between Afghanistan and the region through transit trade, energy and investments that will contribute directly to prosperity and stability into the region and beyond. Participants noted Afghanistan's rapid progress on advancing regional connectivity through mechanisms such as CAREC, SAARC, RECCA, ECO, SCO and projects like CASA 1000, TAPI, and TUTAP, the economic confidence building measures of the 'Heart of Asia'

Istanbul Process, and the development of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor and Charbahar port. The Participants highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for disaster management and risk reduction efforts in Afghanistan.

15. The Afghan Government's domestic reform programme for effective governance includes short, medium, and long-term measures that are intended to provide a sound management framework for aligning expenditures with income, safeguarding Central Bank independence, more transparent and effective governance at all levels (including improving the framework for sub-national governance with more budget authority), streamlining and consolidating the national priority programmes, including new programming, promoting private sector development, supporting women and youth to become productive partners in economic growth, timely reforms to the electoral system, and actions to curb the illicit economy.

16. The Government of Afghanistan set out its commitment to deliver the following critical reforms ahead of the Senior Officials Meeting in 2015: ensuring that a credible budget is passed; scrutinising expenditure and implementing measures to increase revenue including measures to broaden the tax base; strengthening financial sector supervision; specific reforms to improve the conditions for responsible private sector investment; demonstrated actions to improve human rights, particularly the rights of women, including implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the Afghan National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security.

17. The Participants recognised the importance of ensuring the credibility of future elections to strengthening Afghan democracy. The Participants welcomed the Government's commitment to establishing a special commission for the reform of the electoral system and to implementing meaningful electoral reform in the near future.

18. The Participants acknowledged the critical role that the private sector will play in Afghanistan's path to sustainability, and noted the Afghan Government's commitment to improving the Doing Business Indicators, and its commitment to prioritise a stronger, more consistent regulatory framework enabling a stronger and more competitive business environment, as well as investment in infrastructure, agriculture and the extractive industries to help encourage private sector investment and more sustainable economic growth. This commitment includes putting in place the strongest possible available measures, based on international best practice, to counter the threat of conflict and corruption around the extractive industries. The Government of Afghanistan also committed to take specific action to increase levels of domestic and foreign private sector investment in Afghanistan to help create and sustain decent jobs, including for women and youth, and improve access to services and markets. Making progress on an inclusive peace and reconciliation process is critical to pave the way for a conducive environment for future investments in Afghanistan.

19. Poverty reduction and job creation remain major issues in Afghanistan. The Participants shared the Government's concerns and welcomed its initiatives for fostering economic inclusion (with more focus particularly on the agriculture

sector as the largest source of job creation and poverty reduction), including provision of adequate domestic and regional infrastructure, and building a citizens charter of fundamental economic rights that will be provided to deprived and vulnerable people across the country.

20. The Participants recognised the central role of women and youth in Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade, including in political decision making processes, government, the economy, access to health and education, the security and justice sector, and peace and reconciliation efforts. The International Community welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to protecting the rights of and expanding the opportunities for women, and highlighted its steadfast commitment to support and empower Afghan women and girls. The Participants also welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to maintain the integrity of and strengthen implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law. The Participants noted the statement from the Symposium in Oslo on Advancing Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan on 23 November.

Section 4: The Development Partnership

21. The Afghan Government confirmed its resolve, as expressed at Bonn 2011, that the future of its political system will remain firmly founded in the Afghan Constitution. The Afghan people will continue to build a stable, democratic society, based on the rule of law, an effective and independent judiciary, good governance, respect for the rights of all citizens, especially women and girls, and progress in the fight against corruption.

22. The Participants reaffirmed their commitment to aid effectiveness principles, including those set out in the TMAF. They recognised that aid should focus on building Afghan capabilities and on enabling connectivity and increased market access, as well as act as a facilitator for triggering inclusive economic growth. It should enable the Afghan state to play its role as a public service provider, strengthening good governance and promoting rule of law, and ensuring human rights equally for all citizens.

23. The Participants re-affirmed their commitment to aligning with Afghan national priorities, to further improve aid information management, and to take concrete steps towards delivering more aid on budget in tandem with improvements to Afghan budget and expenditure systems. Technical assistance will be demand-driven and focused on strengthening Afghan Government structures at national and sub-national levels.

24. The Participants recognised the important role Afghan civil society has played in Afghanistan's development. The Participants welcomed the Afghan Government's commitment to the constructive, on-going dialogue with civil society, including Afghan women's organisations, to ensure Afghan civil society's full and meaningful involvement in key political processes, strengthening governance and the rule of law, as well as the development, oversight and monitoring of the refreshed TMAF. The Participants also noted the importance of protecting and strengthening free media. The Participants acknowledged the Afghan civil society

statement at the Conference and welcomed the outcomes and conclusions of the Afghan civil society-led “Ayenda” associated event on 3 and 4 December. The Participants also noted the role that international NGOs play in development in Afghanistan as well supporting Afghan Civil Society and recognised as important their traditional role in humanitarian assistance in the future.

25. Sustained engagement of Afghanistan’s regional partners and supporters is key to addressing common challenges. The Participants recognised the importance of the Afghan-led and regionally owned Heart of Asia Istanbul Process, and welcomed the outcomes of the 4th Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference’s Beijing Declaration in October 2014 and Pakistan hosting the 5th Ministerial Conference in 2015. The Participants highlighted the importance of collaboration and coordination between the Afghan-led Istanbul and RECCA processes and all regional organisations and programmes, and committed to work together and with other Governments in the region towards effective trade and transit agreements, streamlined border procedures and customs harmonisation, required transport infrastructure for critical interconnectivity and an effective regional energy network in Central and South Asia.

26. Participants also noted the important and continuing coordination and assistance role of the UN in supporting the new Government. They recognised that the UN mandate renewal scheduled for March 2015 would be an opportunity to acknowledge the need for one UN system as agreed in the Kabul Conference.The Participants welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2145 (2014) extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and look forward to the Security Council’s renewal of the mandate in March 2015**.**

Section 5: The Way Forward

27. The Participants look forward to the Senior Officials Meeting in mid 2015 in Kabul where partners will refresh the TMAF that defines joint objectives for the Transformation Decade, and to the next Ministerial Meeting in 2016.

28. The Afghan Government expressed its appreciation to the UK Government for hosting the London Conference and the Participants for their continued and unprecedented support for the security and development of Afghanistan.